

Adaptation and Integration of Indian Migrants in Brisbane, Australia

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INTRODUCTION

For better or worse, diaspora discourse is being widely appropriated. It is loose in the world, for reasons having to do with decolonization, increased immigration, global communications, and transport — a whole range of phenomena that encourage multilocal attachments, dwelling, and traveling within and across nations (Clifford, 1997: 249).

The emigration of Indians¹ over the past two centuries in response to demands for their services, and skills has resulted in their settlement in all parts of the globe. After the abolition of slavery in the 1830s, over one million indentured labourers were exported to places like Fiji, South Africa, Trinidad, and Mauritius. They were joined by traders who migrated on their own accord outside of official arrangements. After the Second World War mainly unskilled Indian workers² migrated to the Middle East and United Kingdom, and to Australia from the 1970s. The latest phase has seen Indians undertake secondary migration from places like Fiji, South Africa, and Sri Lanka because of the political and/or economic situation in these countries, and well-trained professionals emigrating directly from India to Western countries where their skills are in demand (Clarke et al., 1990: 8). Australia is one such country where people of Indian origin are widespread, diverse in terms of religion and sub-ethnic identity, and displaying a wide range of occupational and income patterns.

While people of Indian origin have been in Australia for almost two centuries, they remain very much a community-in-the-making. This paper focuses on origins and factors that bind them in the absence of propinquity, and those aspects that keep them apart. At its heart is the question of what is “Indian” about the Indian diaspora² there that has become an integral part of the mosaic of cultures in Brisbane. It also examines how this migrant minority is recreating cultural and religious institutions in their new environment and addresses crucial questions that are relevant to them viz. How are they being integrated into Australia, and Brisbane in

particular? What does the policy of multiculturalism imply in Australia and are current international perceptions about Islamic fundamentalism forcing a divide among Indian born Hindus and Muslims, and a review of this policy? While Australia is prepared to accept diversity within norms it defines as acceptable, what will be the outcome when it seeks to root out deviations and beat back what is perceived as forms of Islamic fundamentalism? While these are, broadly, the issues that this paper grapples with, it simultaneously focuses upon change and continuity – in the context of rebuilding identities and the sense of community borne out of supposedly common origins.

INDIANS IN BRISBANE

Brisbane, the capital of Queensland, the third largest state in Australia with about 4 million inhabitants, has witnessed greater numbers of people of Indian origin settling there in the past two decades. Brisbane is the third largest city in Australia after Melbourne and Sydney. Built around the shores of Moreton Bay in the southeast corner of the state, its population reached 1.8 million in 2004. Population increased by almost 12 percent between 1999 and 2004, and is expected to rise rapidly in the next two decades. Brisbane has shed its image as a “branch economy” city to Sydney and Melbourne. It is now a major financial and education centre, as well as a popular tourist destination. While it is difficult to compile an exact profile of Brisbane’s Indian population³, Indians constitute about one percent of Australia’s population. The approximately 200,000 Indians in Australia in 2001 was made up of 90,000 India-born persons; 55,000 second-generation Indians; 40,000 Indo-Fijians, and 15,000 from other countries (Voigt-Graf, 2003: 147). In the five years from 1998 to 2003, migrants from New Zealand (90,000), China (33,000), South Africa (29,000), and India (23,000) added the largest numbers of people to Australia’s population. Most estimates put Brisbane’s Indian population at around 25,000.⁴

Population According to Birthplace, Census 2001⁵

| | <i>Queensland</i> | <i>Brisbane</i> |
|------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| South and Central Asia | 9433 | 5221 |
| Fiji | 7603 | 3919 |
| India | 7307 | 3733 |
| Sri Lanka | 4054 | 2361 |
| South Africa | 14552 | 5414 |
| Singapore | 4553 | 2361 |

While discussions about Australia's population emphasises diversity, this is true only of Sydney and Melbourne where about a quarter of the population was born overseas in 2001. In contrast, just ten percent of Brisbane's population was born overseas. Birrell and Rapson suggest that there are, in fact, "two Australia's", the "multicultural heartland of Sydney and Melbourne and the rest of Australia which is distinctive for its relative absence of ethnic diversity" (Birrell and Rapson, 2002: 11).

From "White Australia" to "Ulticulturalism"

The foundation of Indian settlement was laid by the Indians who were brought to Australia in the nineteenth century as agricultural labourers and domestic helpers. Philip Friell, for example, imported Indian labour in 1845 and 1846 for station work. He had served in India as an administrator to the ruler of Awadh and produced a pamphlet to encourage emigration to Australia. Within five years two of his workers, Belbudda and Dabee Singh, purchased land in Fortitude Valley. Another of Indian origin, John Cassim, established a boarding house at Kangaroo Point with seventeen guest rooms (Singh, 1988: 91). Between 1860 and 1900 Pathans from Punjab, the North West Frontier Province of Baluchistan, and Afghanistan arrived to work as camel drivers, helping local explorers cross the arid desert westwards. At about the same time Sikhs came to work on sugarcane, banana, and potato farms. Most Sikhs eventually settled in Woolgoolga in New South Wales. The Indian population increased from 300 in 1857 to 2000 in 1871, 3000 in 1880, and 4500 by 1900 (Bilmoria, 1996: 11). Queensland passed legislation in 1862 permitting the importation of indentured Indian labour for tropical agriculture but nothing came of this because of the insistence that workers return to India after completing their contracts (Singh, 1988: 93).

The few Indians living in Queensland were excluded from either naturalisation or holding

freehold titles in 1861 and denied the vote in 1885. Growing anti-Asianism culminated in the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901 which became known as the 'White Australia' policy because it effectively stopped Asian immigration (de Lepervanche, 1984: 56). There were 3116 Indians in Australia in 1911. As a result of discriminatory policies, their numbers dropped to 2,189 in 1947 and 2,647 in 1954. Small numbers and wide dispersal made it difficult to resist assimilationist tendencies and precluded forging of a pan-Indian identity (Bilmoria, 1996: 13). This exclusivist "White Australia" policy was relaxed during the 1960s and formally abandoned in 1973 because settlers from Britain and Europe failed to satisfy population-building targets. The Australian Citizenship Act of 1973 made Asians eligible for citizenship for the first time (de Lepervanche, 1984: 72-74). This gave rise to more accommodating policies towards foreigners who wished to migrate to Australia, leading to a rapid increase in migration to this country.

Other non-European immigrants also came from Latin America and the Middle East, mainly Lebanon, but they were superseded by Asians from the late 1970s as Australia began to foster closer ties with the Asia-Pacific region. The proportion of Asian-born Australians increased from 1.78 per cent of the total population to 5.53 per cent between 1981 and 2001. About a third of all new arrivals are Asian-born. Most are skilled. The Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (Dimia) reported in 2002-03 that 61 per cent of Australia's total migration intake was in the skilled stream, as compared to 29 per cent in 1995-96. Five Asian countries were among the top ten sources of skilled immigrants: India (11%); China (8%); Malaysia (7%); Indonesia (5%); and Singapore (4%).

Migration Routes and Roots, Post-1960s

The Indian diaspora in Australia must be seen in the context of the two periods that ushered them in under different historical conditions. The earlier diaspora from the nineteenth century was created within a setting in which Indians, among others from the Pacific, were recruited to serve imperial and colonial interests. Colonial settlers reacted by abruptly curtailing immigration when their dominance of indigenous populations was threatened. The more recent diaspora, largely post-1960s, also serves the interest of Australia's

place in global capitalism. And here, as we shall see, receiving countries like Australia have created the concept of multiculturalism, a policy that has been ferociously debated and remains contested among more conservative factions in Australia. This paper's focus is mainly the latter diaspora, which includes migrants from India, as well as the twice banished Indo-Fijians, Indo-Sri Lankans, and Indo-South Africans. While these migrants left their home countries for different reasons and followed different routes to Australia, internecine violence in Fiji, Sri Lanka and South Africa is a commonly known factor that contributed to the relocation or displacement of Indians from these countries. Some have undertaken multiple migrations before settling in Australia while others have come directly from India. Most migrants are highly skilled professionals, in line with the government's targeting of young, skilled, English-speaking immigrants, particularly doctors, computer programmers, engineers, and other professionals who are considered useful to the burgeoning Australian economy.

Globalisation's opening of national borders has removed barriers that once prevented the entry of Indians into Western countries. Unlike earlier settlers to Australia, new migrants come from many parts of India and belong to diverse religious, linguistic, and cultural groups. Heterogeneity and professionalisation sets them apart from their mainly working class predecessors. New migrants remain geographically concentrated in the old industrial centres of Australia. While some make their way to Brisbane, Perth, and Canberra, the majority settle in Sydney and Melbourne. Between 1996 and 2001, for example, 39 per cent of new immigrants settled in Sydney and 22 per cent in Melbourne; only 8 per cent in Brisbane (Birrell and Rapson, 2002: 16-17). However, an oft cited explanation that Sydney and Melbourne offer greater economic opportunities is not convincing because both Brisbane and Perth are growing at a faster rate. Family and friends, research by Birrell and Rapson suggests, determine migrant settlement. Settled communities attract new migrants from the same birthplace. For example, 57 per cent of all Australian residents born in Fiji were living in Sydney in 1997. This roughly paralleled the 56 per cent of Fijians who settled in Sydney between 1996 and 2001 (Birrell and Rapson, 2002: 16-17).

Most Punjabi's and Karnataki's (IT specialists) have also settled in Sydney. Their reasons for

migrating to Australia include better job opportunities because of the slow ascendancy up the professional ladder in India and improved educational opportunities for their children. Some migrants stated that the USA, Canada, and UK, in that order, were preferred migration choices, but they opted for Australia because of less stringent entry requirements. They hoped to eventually migrate to the USA, Canada, or UK (Voigt-Graf, 2003: 152). Reasons for migrating to Brisbane, according to interviewees, include the holy trinity of Queensland life, sun, surf, and sand, as well as a clean environment, good weather, untapped business potential, low crime, and more affordable property prices. Several Indian interviewees indicated they had prior knowledge of Australia through cricket (Voigt-Graf, 2003: 152).

The relatively better developed tertiary education facilities in Australia have become an important source of foreign exchange for Australia. Education is now Australia's fourth most valuable export. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) reported in September 2005 that education earned Australia almost \$6bn in 2004, putting it behind only coal, tourism, and iron ore as an export commodity, and ahead even of gold.⁶ India's middle classes are targeted by IDP Education Australia,¹ an umbrella body of Australian universities that promotes tertiary education abroad. Australia is attractive to Indian students because the cost of education is lower than the USA and UK, they are allowed to work while studying, and they can take advantage of the liberal laws to apply for permanent residency after completing their studies. Permission to work is important because many students come on large borrowings (Baas, 2005: 8). In 2005, there were around 25-27,000 Indian students flying to Australia, an increase of 35 per annum since 2002. This contrasts with less than 500 Indian students in the early 1990's and the 10,000 Indian student enrolments in 2001. It is expected that by 2008, the inflow from India will surpass that from China which presently stands at around 40,000, largely as a result of the announcement by Australian prime minister John Howard on 6 March 2006 that the government will provide \$A25 million on research and scholarship, specific to India, which should attract more students to Australia (*Business Standard* March 17, 2006).

The majority of Brisbane's "Indian" immigrants are secondary migrants from Fiji, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Singapore, and South and east

Africa. Fiji is a major source of secondary immigration because of political tensions in that country. Since independence in 1970 Indo-Fijians found themselves “unwanted baggage” as indigenous Fijians insisted that political leadership was their “birthright”. One interviewee, who wished to remain anonymous, owned a ten-acre farm and photographic business in Suva. From the mid-1980s his wife, who worked for the national broadcaster, was subjected to “extreme harassment” at work. Like other Indo-Fijians she was searched “unnecessarily” and made to feel “unwanted”. She became frustrated and persuaded her husband to emigrate. Though already in their forties they disrupted their lives and moved to Brisbane. Indo-Fijians were ousted from power through a military coup in 1987 and an attempted civilian coup in 2000. Emigration resulted in a net loss of 29,000 people between 1987 and 1989 (Bedford, 1989: 143). Further, around 6,000 Fijians emigrated annually between 1987 and 1997. Approximately eighty percent of these emigrants were Indo-Fijians. (Chetty and Prasad, 1993: 3-4).

While some government officials in Fiji are concerned at the loss of skill, many celebrate this departure as necessary for the “Fijianisation” of the country (see Lal, 2002). Economic factors are also influencing emigration. Farmers encourage their children to emigrate because of uncertainty created by the imminent expiry of thirty-year agricultural leases and termination of preferential access to the European Union sugar market. Convinced that their future is insecure, professionals and businessmen are leaving in large numbers. According to Umesh Chandra, small businessmen are emigrating because multinationals with government connections are monopolizing business opportunities. Australia and New Zealand are chosen because of their proximity, more lenient visa requirements, and presence of family, which reduces isolation. Most Indo-Fijians feel “welcome” in Australia and have no intention of leaving (Voigt-Graf, 2003: 153). There is consensus among community leaders that there are between 8,000 and 10,000 Indo-Fijians in Brisbane, the Hindu-Muslim split being roughly about 65-35, with a small number of Christians.²

Migrants from Southern Africa, mainly South Africa and Zimbabwe, but also small numbers from Zambia, Mozambique, and Botswana, have been arriving since the mid-1990s. Indian South

Africans have been emigrating primarily because of a drop in levels of confidence and security following the end of White minority rule in 1994; fears that affirmative action will deny employment to younger Indians; exceptionally high levels of crime and violence; and a perception of declining services in education, health, and other government services. Many refer to the expulsion of Indians from Uganda and Tanzania to rationalise and justify their decision and feel that it is only a matter of time before South Africa’s Indians, ‘sandwiched’ between White and Black are also targeted. Emigration destination was determined largely by ease of gaining entry and presence of relatives who would facilitate adaptation to their new environments. Emigration was extremely stressful because of the impact on the family unit and was often seen as a last resort. They have secured permanent residency status on the basis of skills or business and most appear to be financially comfortable (See chapter 7, Singh, 2005).

The above shows that Brisbane’s Indian immigrants are heterogeneous in terms of their reasons for emigrating. Many who came to Australia on permanent residency visas, professionals, intend to stay temporarily and emigrate to the USA or UK, while those who came temporarily, students, hope to stay permanently. The former are using their cultural capital to establish themselves in the global system and must be viewed as entrepreneurs rather than victims (Ballard, 1994: 8). While Australia’s population has become more ethnically diverse since the 1970s, people of European descent constitute an overwhelming majority. They comprised 91 per cent of the population in 2001, while those of Asian descent constituted just 7 per cent. Countries of origin of Asians included China, Vietnam, India, the Philippines, and Malaysia.

The Dynamics of Adaptation and the Australian policy of Multiculturalism

Australia’s policy of multiculturalism permits people of Indian origin relative freedom to observe their religious festivals and socio-cultural practices. The origins of this policy followed the end of the “White Australia” policy and gradual transformation of the country into a multiethnic and multiracial entity. Sensitive to the difficulties that migrants were experiencing in adapting to Australian conditions, the government, through Al Grassby, Labor Minister for Immigration in 1973,

released a draft policy paper titled “*A multicultural society for the future*”. In many respects Al Grassby’s policy paper is symptomatic of the fact that most modern-liberal states accept the challenges of multiculturalism, even if they do not consciously endorse it, because of the “conflicting claims of groups of people who share identities and identity-conferring practices that differ from those of the majority in the state” (Kelly, 2002: 1). The Australian government accepted that many migrants required assistance to adapt and hence promoted ethnic and national organisations to maintain migrant cultures and to uphold languages and heritages. The Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs (AIMA) was established in 1979 to raise awareness of cultural diversity and promote tolerance. Programs were instituted to implement this policy. “Living in Harmony”, “Diversity Works!”, and “Access and Equity Strategy” responded to diversity in local communities and attempted to reduce racism.⁷

Most migrants left their home countries because of political turmoil or in search of better economic prospects, and interviewees generally displayed nostalgia for “Indian” culture which, they felt, provided emotional succour. Australian society, they believed, was “cultureless”. “Indian culture”, taking its cue from Clifford, is not seen to have a geographic centre or homeland. For Clifford, questions of authenticity, origin, essentialism, stasis, wholeness, and so on are irrelevant and mask the processes of culture in the contemporary world, where identification is hybrid, ongoing, and constantly shifting (Clifford, 1997: 247). Migrants are tending to dis-aggregate into cultural, ethnic, and religious groups. Hindus and Muslims begin congregating with those with whom they share a lot in common, primarily from their “home” countries, but also from other parts of the world, according to regional origin, ethnicity, language, and ritual practice. Migrants are inclined towards compressing their identities into “homogeneous” categories such as South Indian Hindu, North Indian Hindu, or Muslim as they confront rising sectarianism and new challenges posed in terms of liberal cosmopolitanism. Linking up with people of a similar religious or regional background has acquired precedence over socialization of a more liberal scale.

Adaptation Through Religion

In India, it is rare to find someone who prefers

not to be identified on the basis of religion and language. It is central to their existence as citizens of that country and often provides the basis for mobilization, contestation, and identity-building. In Brisbane, religion and other customary practices have been reproduced in ways that reflect the traditions and practices of where the migrant Indians actually came from. While their practices are continuations of what was rooted in India, the respective countries in which they initially settled imposed upon them adaptations that became peculiarities of their regional settlements. Their building of temples, churches, and mosques, and celebrations through rituals and festivals, are not only becoming an anchor for their regionalism in Brisbane, but also a centre for the recreation of their identities in a new environment. Since many migrants are still first generation, organisations mainly cater for individuals from specific countries of origin or regions of India. It is through organizations such as these that migrants are integrating successfully into a predominantly mono-ethnic, Christian and politically liberal Brisbane society. Organisations are multi-functional in that they stage cultural projects and facilitate a socialization process that minimizes the harshness of isolation in foreign conditions.

The Indian Cultural Association (ICA) has been hosting an annual event at Mount Gravatt Show Grounds each September since 1995. An estimated 25,000 people attend over two days. The Bazaar reflects a show of unity in which many groups band together. The two-day program of parades, speeches, entertainment, and cultural items is notable for the participation of diverse religious, cultural and linguistic groups. There are dance and musical performances, book exhibits, information on Indian organizations, and in excess of fifty stalls. A trade marquee displaying the services of Indian companies features prominently. Relations between Hindus and Muslims of Fijian origin are excellent and the Queensland Association of Fijian Muslims is an active participant in the Bazaar. ICA secretary Prem Chand said that the Bazaar had been started “to provide a platform to the community to share its cultural heritage with the wider Australian society. It is indeed an opportunity to build new alliances and friendships, and ... share our culture with all around us at the same time as we get together for a few hours and have fun” (BIT, October 2004). An exciting new feature in 2005 was an Indian Festival Queen and Indian Festival Charity

Queen, aimed at raising funds for charity and encouraging the participation of women from different cultural backgrounds in public forums. The winner received sashes by the Lady Mayoress on 16 September and was crowned the following day at the Mt Gravatt showgrounds (*BIT*, October 2004).

The Hindu population in Brisbane is a significant religious minority that attracted attention for this paper. Their numbers relative to the larger population and the efforts that they have made to ensure survival of their beliefs and practices is provided below as a glimpse of what they have achieved so far. At the 2001 census, 95,448 Australians recorded their religious background as Hindu (0.4% of the population). The majority, 51,460, lived in New South Wales, with only 5,201 in Brisbane. While Hindus generally accept the fundamental unity of their faith, the decentralised nature of Hinduism means that devotional beliefs, attitudes, and practices vary. The many expressions of Hinduism in Brisbane are due to differences of caste, language, and ancestral origins. Several temples have been built to create a spiritual and religious iconolatry with which migrants are familiar. These serve as focal points for the community, promote the Hindu religion, and function as informal social service agencies. The four major temples are the Hindu Mandir Association of Queensland at Burbank; Gayatri Mandir in Boondall; Ganesha Temple in South Maclean; and Sri Sri Gaur Nitai - Hare Krishna Temple in Graceville. These temples actively transmit what they deem orthodox religious practices and cultural traditions. Only a few Hindus live in the immediate vicinity of these temples. But they are built within easy access of major highways of Brisbane, enabling devotees to reach them within a half hour's drive from where they live.

The Hindu Mandir is an inclusive temple that caters for Hindus mainly from India, Fiji, and South Africa. Its management committee, under president Rakesh Sharma who migrated from Punjab in 1985, includes members from Punjab and Gujarat, as well as Fiji and South Africa. Officially opened on 26 January 1992, the *Gayatri Mandir* in Boondall is managed by the Fijian-controlled Hindu Society of Queensland. The Ganesha Temple (Sri Selva Vinayakar Koyil) was started by South Indians from Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka. From 1983 Tamils began holding congregational prayer meetings at various homes. As their numbers increased it became necessary

to build a temple and they formed a committee in April 1986 to raise funds abroad. Land was eventually purchased at South Maclean and the foundation stone for the temple and additional shrines for Siva, Vishnu, and Navagraha was laid on 10 June 1993. Deities, shrine doors, and other materials were imported from South India, while sculptors from South India completed the temple, which was officially opened on 5 February 1995. The Sri Sri Gaur Nitai - Hare Krishna Temple in Graceville, was established by Upendra Das in 1972 and includes mainly White Australian and Gujarati devotees. It falls under the auspices of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON).

In several instances churches have been purchased and converted into temples as well as mosques. Umesh Chandra and his team of trustees, for example, converted an Anglican Church into the *Gayatri Mandir*, thus avoiding the need to apply for permission to change the land use to a religious site, which would have entailed inviting public objections.³ Trustees at all temples are well-qualified professionals. For example, the executive of the Mandir, Deepak Kumar, Prakash Shandil, and Prem Chand are engineers. Diversity in membership means that special measures have to be taken to accommodate devotees. At the Mandir, for example, while members from India and Fiji are proficient in Hindi, South Africans do not speak the language. Meetings are therefore conducted in English while Hindi is used during religious services with English translations.⁴

Temple committees organize religious classes for children; music and dance programs for both children and adults; and invite religious scholars to address devotees on special occasions. Library facilities are also provided. The Hare Krishna Temple in Graceville publishes literature and celebrates festivals specific to the Vaisnava calendar, including *Janmastami*, the birth of Lord Krishna; *Gaura Purnima*, the Appearance Day of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu; *Sri Radhastami*, the Appearance Day of Srimate Radharani; *Govardhan Puja*, and Diwali. Major Hindu festivals are celebrated communally at the Mandir, while the regular programme includes Ramayan, bhajans, and kirtans. During the Ram Naumi festival in March and Krishna Janashmathi in August, both of which last nine days, the Mandir invites priests from India to conduct rituals. These periods generally, especially through attendance

by Hindu priests from India, tend to attract larger numbers of devotees.⁵

Despite their efforts of trying to recreate methods of worship and normative social practices, religious and community leaders face many obstacles. The two main challenges identified by interviewees are maintaining the vernacular and an interest among the youth in religious services. Transmit of the vernacular is proving difficult because most Hindus are dispersed and English is the medium of communication in Australia. Youth who attend functions tend to “wander off to talk to friends after a while. They are not interested in bhajan singing”. Temple committees admit that their programmes are up against a dominant force that puts them at a significant disadvantage in what is tantamount to a civilisational clash.⁶

Identity-building through Language and the Arts

Numerous sectional bodies serve regional interests. The Gujarati Association of Queensland, the Punjabi Cultural Association of Queensland, ‘Brisbane Varthakal’ - Malayalee Association of Queensland, Kashmiri Social Association of Queensland, and Brisbane Bengalee Samaj promote the cultural heritage of people from their respective regions. Religious and language schools like the Brisbane Bangla Language School, Gujarati Language School, Hindustani Language School, Brisbane Sinhala School, and Brisbane Tamil School are important institutions that serve the cultural and linguistic needs of their respective communities. Language is viewed as an important medium for the transmission and maintenance of value systems. For instance, under the auspices of the Queensland Hindustani Language School, the Hindi language is taught at several sights on Sunday mornings and according to the president, Sarat Maharaj, “without OUR language and OUR culture our children will lose their Indian values”. Around a hundred students were enrolled in 2005. As a form of encouragement by the state, and in resonance with its policy of multiculturalism, a curriculum has been approved by Education Queensland so that Hindi can be taught in mainstream schools (*Annual Newsletter*, 2005).

The *Arya Pratinhi Sabha of Brisbane* was formed by Fijians to promote activities based on Hindu Vedic philosophy; the Kshatriya Society of Brisbane caters for Gujaratis of India and Fiji,

while the Queensland Indian Cultural Youth Association and Queensland Indian Cultural Association are more inclusive and broad based. The Sangam Association of Queensland was formed by Fijians of South Indian ancestry to “preserve and promote South Indian Arts and culture in Queensland and to develop close community relationships through cultural, religious, recreational, sports and other activities.” Membership is confined to those of “South Indian origin from Fiji or linked to a “South Indians from Fiji” by marriage. The Brisbane Sikh Temple and Sikh Association of Queensland cater for Sikh migrants from England and India. The Shree Sanatan Dharam Hindu Association of Queensland, founded in 1995, is a branch of the Shree Sanatan Dharam Pratinidhi Sabha of Fiji. It grew out of the Gayatri Mandir and was formed by individuals wanting to retain ties with Fiji. The Sanatan’s comprehensive programme includes sports, drama, and education, as well as special activities for women and senior citizens. A soccer team, for example, is selected to participate annually against other Fijian-migrant teams in Australia, and in Fiji against Shree teams from various parts of the world.

Popular Culture, Music and Sport

The performative aspects of diasporic Indians, which includes religious rituals, festivals, and popular culture packaged for an international audience, is what occasionally brings Indians together as a community. Popular culture among the Indian diaspora in Brisbane is widely articulated through its food, fashion, cinema and television programmes – including prepaid satellite television services such as Sony and Zee TV. Hindi-language movies are shown on the regular movie circuit and available in numerous video shops. Their popularity is boosted by regular visits to Australia by Bollywood stars, classical musicians, and bhangra (popular music) groups. Such appeal was established for instance when a group called the “Merchants of Bollywood”, played at the exclusive Lyric Theatre during November 2005 to packed houses for all of their shows.

In line with its policy of multiculturalism, local government institutions provide money for cultural activities. For instance, popular Indian violinists Lalgudi Srimathi and Anuradha Sridhar performed in Brisbane with funding provided by the Brisbane City Council (*BIT* 10 September

2005). Home grown musicians are also emerging. *Swara Mohini* is a classical music association in the tradition of sangeetha sabhas. Rajyashree Srikanth, an outstanding exponent of Karnatic music from South India, is Brisbane's most prominent classical musician of international standards. Rohith Badya is an expert of Yakshagana, the ancient masked dance ritual from South West India renowned for its elaborate costuming and make-up. *Sruthi Swara Laya*, founded by classical carnatic singer Vijaya Visvanathan, performs a fusion of north and south Indian music. The Nadananjali School of Indian Dance was founded in 1993 by Chitra Yogi Srikhanta to teach the sacred art form of Bharata Natyam which tells of Hindu myths and religious folklore. Lekh Ram Suk launched a Bhajan CD "Naya Sur, Taal naya" ("Notes and new beats"), and started a band "Sounds of Brisbane" in October 2005 (*BIT* December 10, 2005).

Club Masti, Streetheat, and Bhangranights cater for younger Indians. DJ Desi, DJ Jesta, and DJ Reg perform to packed crowds on weekends. DJ Desi typifies the Noughties generation. This science graduate of the Queensland University of Technology is currently completing an MSC in IT. His familiarity with Hindi, Punjabi, Marathi, Tamil, and Gujarati music has turned him into a popular DJ among most of Australia's Indian youth who have made club culture their weekend past-time. Club Masti, opened in 2004, organises Indian functions and 'masti' (naughty) - dance parties. The Brisbane Babas Band was formed in September 2002 and has notched up over fifty performances at wedding receptions, birthdays, and fundraising events. The band's "wall of fame" performances include playing at the Indian and Australian cricket teams' street party, Indian Bazaar, Queensland Multicultural Festival, and Multicultural awards night. Younger Indians thrive on having the security and economic prosperity of Australia coupled with as much Indian culture as they desire.

Sport, in particular soccer, is popular among Indians. However, it is forging and entrenching ethnic and religious barriers instead of breaking them. This is seen especially in the way they name their teams and the ways in which competitions are arranged. The Sanatan soccer tournament, for instance, run by the Queensland Sanatan Sports and Social Association, has four participants Saraswati Ramayan Mandali, Sunnybank Ramayan Mandali, Wynnum Ramayan Mandali,

and Banyo Ramayan Mandali. At the end of the tournament a team was chosen to participate in the Sanatan Soccer Tournament in Sydney in September 2005 and in Fiji during Easter 2006.⁷ Indian Muslims, likewise, participate in a league which has eight Muslim teams of all nationalities. A Brisbane Islamic Soccer League was launched in 2003 to promote "brotherhood and friendship amongst the Muslim youth and general community". Teams reflect the national/communal identities such as Fijian, East African, Turkish, Iraqi, Indonesian, and Afghans, with name like Iraq, Bafana Bafana, Indonesian, Yathrib Horsemen, and Brotherhood. Tiger 11 is made up of asylum seekers who had fled Afghanistan.⁹

Community Media

Radio, newspapers, and television are important in forming "community" among people with little propinquity. The Aaj Kal Television Program was started in September 2003 by the state "to showcase the Indian way of life to the wider multicultural Australian society; highlight social, cultural, health and other issues faced by persons of Indian origin; and promote Indian culture and tradition by making Indians proud of their culture and traditions". It broadcasts nationally "A Program for the Community by the Community" on Channel 31 on Sunday mornings.⁸ For the internet generation, *Hello India* is an internet search directory offering online information about Indian products and services in Australia. It is a virtual meeting ground for Indo-Australians, providing information about businesses, services and social events. *Queensland Indian Community. News. Events. Views*, run by QINDIAN, carries similar information as *Hello India* but also has links to local religious, social and cultural organizations, birthdays, death notices, Hinduism, and so on. Aside from information, community media offers "companionship and nostalgia" (Clyne and Grey, 2004: 24).

Newspapers are generally romanticized publications of Indians overseas, aiming to inform their target group and celebrate the achievements of Indians within Australia. They provide extensive coverage of developments in India and elsewhere – including the successes of Indians in the USA, UK and Canada. The Melbourne-based *Bharat Times* was founded in 1997 to coincide with Golden Jubilee celebrations of India's Independence. But it also serves a

readership from the wider sub-continent, that is, migrants from Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, India, as well as those of Indian origin now settled outside the subcontinent and throughout Australia. The Sydney-based *Hindi Samachar Patrika*, started in 1997, is the only Hindi language newspaper printed in Australia. With a national readership of 8000, it promotes Hindi and seeks to “preserve” Indian customs and culture in Australia. The *Brisbane Indian Times* (BIT) was officially launched by the Lord Mayor of Redcliffe Allan Boulton on September 24, 2003. Published by estate agents Umesh and Usha Chandra of Fiji, BIT has a circulation of 15,000 throughout Queensland, Sydney, Melbourne, Auckland, and Fiji. It provides a mix of local, national, and international coverage of issues concerning Indians across religious, caste, and national lines. According to Umesh Chandra the paper strives “to provide balanced multicultural reporting” (*BIT* September 10, 2005). For example, the October 2005 issue was a joint Deepawali/Ramadaan issue containing greetings to both communities and articles on the significance of both festivals. All newspapers contain a matrimonial section that draws advertisements from Indians all around the world.

Radio too is an important source of entertainment, education, local community information, and a means to maintain language. Prior to 1973 broadcasting in languages other than English was limited to 2.5 per cent of total transmission time. The lifting of this restriction has led to a proliferation of community language media with free-to-air radio broadcasting in more than 80 languages (Clyne and Grey, 2004: 26). Radio 4EB FM is the only fulltime Brisbane-based ethnic broadcaster. From humble beginnings in 1979 it now has around 4500 members facilitating over fifty language groups, including Bengali, Hindi, Telegu, Tamil, Sinhala, and Urdu. The Sri Lanka program has been running longest, with the first monthly, half-hour program on Sundays broadcast on 4 February 1980 under the auspices of the Sri Lanka Society of Queensland. As the number of Sri Lankans increased, a second programme was broadcast from 1985 and production switched from English to Sinhala. Ethnic radio programs were started, according to Kannagara, to help migrants settle in Australia “without losing their culture”.⁹ However, as more people have access to radio stations via the web, ethnic radio may begin to lose significance while

links with home countries are strengthened. Managed by Jatish Puran, the Fijian-controlled Brisvaani Radio 1701 AM is Australia’s only monolingual Hindi radio station. When the radio was started in September 1997, ‘management, mindful of the diverse interests, religious and ethnic origins of the audience’, was determined to use it as a medium to ‘foster mutual understanding between the different ethnic groups in the Indian Community while also carrying news from India and Singapore, its focus is largely on Fiji.

Making Community

Brisbane’s Indians are mostly “transmigrants” who maintain economic, social, and sometimes political relations with their countries of origin. They are connected to their countries of origin through visits, telephone, internet, and remittances. They are also involved in raising aid communally at times of natural calamities like the tsunami in December 2004 and the October 2005 earthquake in Pakistan. Many migrants have left societies plagued by political, economic, or social problems. They continue to identify with movements and issues in their homelands, whether this be the conflict in Kashmir, the struggle of the Tamils in Sri Lanka, political victimisation of Indians in Fiji, crime in South Africa, or ‘anarchy’ in Zimbabwe. Since most migrants are relatively recent, the bond with their homelands remains strong and they tend to coalesce with fellow nationals, and others who may be of the same language, ethnic, or religious group. This makes it difficult to forge broad ‘Indian’ identity. Occasionally migrants transcend narrow national concerns and meet as ‘Indians’. The policy of multiculturalism encourages the retention and sometimes creation of separate ethnic identities as part of celebrating being Australian.

The inaugural Multicultural Awards night hosted by BIT in October 2004 was a sign of maturing community. The BIT had been formed, according to Umesh Chand, to “create role models and encourage more enterprise”. The awards were initiated to “recognise and reward the tireless efforts of leaders and achievers within our multicultural community”. While the Australian government uses “multicultural” to refer to racial differences mainly, here the awards were designed to bring together Indians from various religious, language, ethnic, and national groups. Sponsors included the Aldy Group, Ramesh Singh

of the Bank of Queensland, and Deepak Kumar, traditional landowners. The evening included the singing of the Australian National Anthem by the Babas Band. Parmesh Chand highlighted the important role of ethnic media in a multicultural society. Ms Hurriyet Babacan, representing Premier Beattie, spoke on the government's respect for multiculturalism. Professor Sarva Daman Singh, Honorary Consul for India, was the chief guest for the night. He thanked the government for its multicultural policies and applauded the awards night as a great step forward for Indians. Entertainers from Melbourne and Sydney, together with the Brisbane Babas Band performed throughout the night (*BIT* October 16, 2004). This annual event has the potential to bring together mainly middle-class Indians.

The Federation of Indian Communities of Queensland (FICQ) is an umbrella body consisting of 21 organisations which represent people of Indian origin from mainland India, Fiji, South Africa, Malaysia, and elsewhere now living in Queensland. FICQ was formed in 1998 to provide a platform for Indians to work as one on common issues for the benefit of all people of Indian origin in Queensland. Membership is open to all organisations who "identify with India or who are of Indian sub-continent origin". Its members include the Australia India Society, Australia-Anglo Society of Brisbane, Arya Samaj of Queensland, Australia-Malaysia Business Council, Bengali Association of Queensland, Club de Goa, Fiji Australia Club, Gujarati Association of Queensland, Hindu Mandir Association, Hindu Society of Queensland, Indian Cultural Association, South African Group, Kannada Sangha of Qld, Kashmiri Association of Qld, Punjabi Association and Tamil Association.

Fiji National Day

Of all the 'national' groups Fijians are most vocal on political issues in their home country. Most Indo-Fijian families in Fiji, it is said, have at least one member abroad. The strong indo-Fijian presence in Brisbane is reflected in the large number of organisations and events organised by and for those who are originally from Fiji. The Fiji Senior Citizens' Satsang Association of Queensland, 'International Congress of Fiji Indians'; Fiji Indians Student Association; Fiji Australia Club, and Friends of Fiji Club are some of the myriad of Fijian associations. The Fiji

Australia Club is multi-religious. Its patrons include a Hindu, Anil Karan, and a Muslim Mohammed Sattar. The president is a woman, Usha Kashyap, while committee members include Muslims and Hindus. Monthly meetings are held at the Sunnybank Library on Sunday mornings. Fiji National Day is celebrated annually with an extravaganza dinner which provides a forum for ex-pats. In 2004, for example, the theme was 'Youth and Achievement'. Jamie Dunn from B105 radio station conducted interviews with young sporting and academic achievers, while the 'Quin Tikis' of Fiji provided entertainment for the evening (*BIT* October 2004). The "Movement for Democracy and Human Rights in Fiji" (MDHRF), a Brisbane-based group, regularly invites high-profile speakers. For example, former Fijian prime minister and current leader of the opposition, Mahendra Chaudhary, was guest speaker at the *Taste of India* restaurant in September 2005. He was introduced by the deputy mayor of Brisbane David Hinchcliffe (*BIT* September 10, 2005). The movement, changed its name to "The Friends of Fiji Association" (FFA) under the leadership of Eric Singh at its AGM on December 10, 2005 when Chaudhary was again the chief guest. FFA was formed to help former Fijians now residing in Australia as well as those in Fiji facing economic hardship. It has consistently urged the Australian government to take a stronger stand against what it perceives to be 'undemocratic' actions in Fiji which are depriving that country's citizens of liberties guaranteed under the constitution.¹⁰

Indian Independence Day

Indian Independence Day celebrations have been held annually since 2001 to commemorate India's independence from the British. The largest function, a "Patriotic Evening", is usually hosted by the India Club of Queensland at MacGregor State School. It includes Indian classical music and dance items performed by local talent. A skit by school and university students in 2005 "featured the sincere patriotism of political leaders before and after independence". Local band "Victor Melody Makers" provided entertainment. Cultural items, speeches and *bhangara* dominated the evening. The famous *Taj Oberoi* restaurant on the Gold Coast hosted a celebration by prominent businessman Pushpindar Oberoi with the Brisbane Babas Band providing entertainment for the evening. A flag raising ceremony was held at the Consulate of India by

Hon Consul General of India Professor Sarva Daman Singh who told the gathering that India and Australia were “increasingly getting closer to each other for the benefit of both. That pleases us, as we have made Australia our home. She welcomes us and provides limitless opportunities for self-fulfillment in a free and fair society.” (*BIT* September 10, 2005). The main support for Indian Independence Day comes from Indians of India. A few members of other countries who studied in India attend. But this is not an occasion when ‘community’ is forged across national lines.¹¹¹¹

Eidfest 2005

Muslims organised an inaugural celebration of the festival of Eidul Adha in October 2005, on the first Sunday after the end of the month of fasting, called Ramadan. The organising group for the event, which they called Eidfest, was made up of individuals like Sultan Deen, Suraya Waqar, Rubana Moola, Yasmin Khan, and Laila Elias from a range of organisations and nationalities. According to Ms Elias this was an opportunity to “showcase the very best of Islam and Muslim culture in Queensland, ... allow the brotherhood of the Muslim community to strengthen, and give the next generation ownership of their religious experience” (Interview). Sixty stalls were taken up by businesses and community organisations; there was entertainment for children and adults, including plays, Lebanese dancing, school choirs, and Qawwali (Urdu songs). While the event was a success with around 7000 people visiting, it was supported mainly by Muslims across national lines. This event helped to forge a Muslim as opposed to Indian identity, as few non-Muslims attended.

Race and Politics

Public debates about Australian culture and identity have vacillated between “traditional” or “Anglo” Australian and multicultural ideas about national identity (Zevallos, 2005: 41). Australia’s commitment to multiculturalism and diversity has generated controversy over whether the country is becoming Asianised. In 1991, 73 per cent of respondents considered the intake of immigrants “too high” (Betts, 2005: 29). This reflected the national politics of the period. The anti-Asian immigration policies of Pauline Hanson and her promise to defend Australia from the “decadence”

of coloured immigration, helped the One Nation Party capture a sizeable share of votes in the 1996 general election. Many analysts and observers thought at the time that Australia was regressing to the days of White Australia. The focus of national politics, subsequently shifted to asylum seekers and illegal immigrants. Under Prime Minister John Howard the Asianisation debate has been defused because of economic prosperity, the government’s tough stand on illegal immigrants, strong emphasis on border control, tightly-regulated, skills-focused migration policy, and restricted access to welfare for new immigrants. By 2001, the proportion who thought that the immigration intake was too large had fallen to 41 per cent (Betts, 2005: 29).

Anti-Asianism could resurface, however, if neo-liberal policies and new industrial relations legislation has an adverse economic effect.¹⁰ If Anglo-Australians perceive “foreigners” to be taking their jobs or feel threatened as Indians lay claim to public space by constructing mosques and temples and holding festivals, all of which are making their presence permanent, there could be a resurgence of anti-immigration sentiments. Surveys by the Australian Election Study show that those who felt that immigration had “gone too far” dropped from 56.8 per cent in 1990 to 30 per cent in 2004, after peaking at 60 per cent in 1996. A disaggregation of the 2004 statistics revealed that 20 per cent of professionals, managers, and administrators thought that immigration had “gone too far” and 20 per cent thought it had “not gone far enough”. Among labourers, service workers, and elementary workers, however, 45 per cent felt that immigration had “gone too far” and only 7.3 per cent thought it had “not gone far enough”. Education and social class shaped attitudes to immigration: 15 per cent of university graduates and 42 per cent of lowly educated workers thought that immigration had “gone too far” (Betts, 2005: 34-35). Opposition to immigration remains strong among those in low skilled occupations most threatened in a globalizing job market.

Most Indian community leaders speak glowingly about Australia’s strong commitment to multiculturalism. They point out the individuals and officials are receptive to other cultures and religions and allow Indians to observe their festivals and rituals. Several felt that Indians, in turn, should be ‘grateful and not overstep the mark’. They should ‘respect being Australian’ and

the benefits this carries (Interview, Umesh Chandra). In response to its changing population profile, the Queensland government has taken the initiative to better understand cultural issues when dealing with migrant communities. The Police Services, for example, appointed Ms Rima Salameh and Mr Andrea Bak to be police liaison officers for the Sudanese and Muslim communities respectively (*BIT* October 2004). Like many Indians, restaurant owner P. Sridhar admitted hearing reports of racism but said that he has never personally encountered problems. He was adamant that Australia's attempts to build a multicultural society are working. "When I first came here," he said, "I was feeling out of place but, in fact, I was stupid enough to think that way because there was not a single feeling that came across to me of people not accepting me" (*BIT* November 2005). Another interviewee, Ms B.P. a woman in her thirties who wished to remain anonymous, felt that while there were racist elements in every society, this was in the minority in Brisbane and that there were no barriers to success. "If you show your ability and fit into the society, then you will have no problems."

The fickle existence of immigrants was underscored by international tensions involving the United States and its allies in the 'War on Terror'. This has sparked vigorous debate about the meaning of multiculturalism, and a reconsideration of Australian identity and the place of the constituents within it. The September 2001 attacks on the Twin Towers in New York, Bali bombings in 2002 which targeted Australians, London bombings in July 2005, arrest of almost twenty alleged Muslim terrorists in Sydney and Melbourne during November 2005, riots in Cronulla during December 2005¹¹, and the continuing "War on Terror" have brought the place of Muslims in Australian society to centre stage. While most Australian Muslims are of Arab or Turkish descent, the small Indian Muslim community is grouped with them rather than the broader construct, "Indian" and therefore feel targeted.

Treasurer and aspiring prime minister Peter Costello's comments in February 2006 raised the bar in the debate. He said that "before becoming an Australian, you will be asked to subscribe to certain values. If you have strong objections to those values, don't come to Australia." He condemned "confused, mushy, misguided multiculturalism" and warned that Muslims who were

naturalised Australians should be stripped of their citizenship if they did not subscribe to Australian values. Multiculturalism, he felt, went too far when it advocated that naturalised citizens ignore their new country to preserve unchanged the values and loyalties of the old (*Sydney Morning Herald* February 25, 2006). The egalitarian strand of multiculturalism, recognising the claim of all cultures without seeking uniformity, is clearly becoming untenable in the contemporary context. Notwithstanding multiculturalists' arguments that culture went to the heart of a person's identity, Costello was suggesting that culture and equality were incompatible commitments and that only those aspects of the culture of immigrants that did not undermine the dominant Anglo-Australian norms and values would be accepted.

Muslim leaders who intended appealing to Prime Minister Howard were disappointed when Howard said that multi-culturalism had become "distorted" and too often "stupidly meant a federation of cultures". In an interview marking his tenth anniversary as prime minister, Howard went further when he said that most Australians find the *burqa*, the full head-to-toe covering worn by some Muslim women, "confronting". Some government backbenchers even called for banning of the *hijab*, or headscarf (*SMH* February 25, 2006). NSW Premier, Morris Iemma, who has a large Muslim population in his electorate of Lakemba, and leader of the Opposition Labour Party, Kim Beasley, both supported Costello and Howard. Many Muslims are concerned about the future since their treatment is contingent on the actions of protagonists over whom they have no control. How the conflict between culture, as a set of beliefs and practices having a prior claim to individuals, and politics will be resolved, remains to be seen. It would seem that minority groups are going to be increasingly placed under pressure to revise their beliefs and practices to comply with the norms of the dominant culture for fear of damaging the nation (see Barry, 2001).

CONCLUSIONS

Few of Brisbane's Indian immigrants meet the classic definition of diaspora as longing for an imagined homeland, nor the more popular definition of group ethnic consciousness sustained by a 'sense of distinctiveness, a common history and belief in a common fate' (Singh, 2003:

3). They are segmented by ethnicity, culture, caste, class, religion, region of origin, and migration histories, and constitute a multitude of identities. While caste identities have largely dissipated among overseas Indians, caste consciousness persists among Indians from India. According to one interviewee, Mrs Jehu, they feel superior to migrants from Fiji, South Africa, Sri Lanka and elsewhere whom they see as having low-caste origins because of their indentured background. She has worked hard to overcome these condescending attitudes by emphasizing that most descendants of indentured Indians should be admired for the enormous strides they have made. Umesh Chandra, likewise, pointed out that he mixed in Indian circles and detected subtle negativity towards overseas Indians who were seen to have lost their “authentic” culture, caste, and religious practices and comprising eclectic and hybrid groups, and because indentured migrants were seen to be of low caste and class. The relationship between Indians from India and overseas Indians is fraught, characterised by mutual ignorance, prejudice, incomprehension, and even contempt. The professionalisation of Indian migration since the 1970s has brought class into sharper focus as differences in economic status has added to the many other distinctions among Indians. Various “little Indias”, it can be argued, are providing the social, cultural, spiritual, and psychological capital for ethnic or national groups settling in Brisbane.

Indian migrants represent an eclectic group. Those from countries like Fiji and South Africa do not exhibit what Singh regards as a core feature defining diaspora internationally, namely, the ‘collective imagining of India – of emotions, links, traditions, feelings and attachments that together continue to nourish a psychological appeal among successive generations of emigrants for the “mother” country’ (Singh, 2003: 4). Also missing is a ‘myth of return’ as no diasporic groups have serious plans to return to the ‘homeland’. On the contrary, while remaining nostalgic about their lands of origin, most migrants seem happy to continue to live in Australia. Repeated migration is another feature of the Indian immigrant experience. Most students from India, wealthy migrants from South Africa, and professionals from India may be termed “temporary migrants”. Students may be forced to return to their home countries or go elsewhere in search of jobs, while the wealthiest

businessmen from South Africa, having acquired the security of citizenship, might want to return to South Africa where economic conditions are still favourable, and professionals may seek openings in the USA.

Most Indian lives remain interwoven with transnationalism. Their social world includes parts of their places of origin as well as their new homes. They are maintaining contact with their homelands by opening local branches of organisations of which they were members prior to emigration, remitting funds, visits to family, or raising funds during times of natural calamities. Lower transport costs, faster communication networks, and the globalisation of fashion and entertainment have made settlement in Brisbane easier. The “technological breakthroughs in near instantaneous communications and rapid long-distance travel have decreased the cost for conquering the tyranny of distance and make homeland ties both easier to maintain and easier to pass to descendants born in Australia” (Brown, 2002: 73). Transnational ties and multiculturalism are leading to “semi-settlement” and “bifurcated identities” (Heisler, 1986). All of this is not to suggest that we should dismiss the notion of Indians constituting a diaspora.

Despite the many differences, it can be argued that Indians do constitute a group with something in common in relation to the broader Anglo-Australian community. While many Indians grow up in mostly white middle-class suburbs, and their education and occupation profiles are indistinguishable from their white peers, their ethnic experiences are shaped by their racial status as not “white”, their continuing ties with their homelands, and a global consumer industry which targets them as ethnic consumers. They either adopt ethnic labels or these are imposed on them, they consume ethnic products, and participate in voluntary ethnic societies. Through Bollywood, fairs, festivals, ethnic foods, and religious gatherings, collective enjoyment of music, arts, and fashion, and transnational connections, they are creating what Clifford (1997: 251) has called “alternative publics spheres”. In this public sphere Indian diasporic identity cannot be reduced to particular national, ethnic, or religious traditions, but they do represent adapted forms of preferences and practices that can be traced back to India. While Indians lack a true and common homeland they are identified as a group with something in common in comparison

to other segments of society. This diversity, as Singh points out, is a “mere replication of the Indian social condition that also produced an equally ambiguous and modular nationalism” (Singh, 2003: 5).

NOTES

1. IDP (International Development Programs) Education Australia is an independent non-for-profit organisation with head offices in Canberra and Sydney, offering international education and development services, including student recruitment and testing. IDP is owned by 38 Australian universities. It was established in 1969 as an aid body and funded by the Australian government. The original name of the organisation was “Australian-Asian Universities’ Cooperation Scheme”. Today, IDP has activities in over 50 countries.
2. Interviews, Umesh Chandra, 13 January 2006; and Abdul Jalal, 16 January 2006.
3. Interview, Umesh Chandra, 13 January 2006.
4. Interview, Ramesh Chandra, 10 January 2006.
5. Interview, Umesh Chandra, 13 January 2006.
6. Interview, Rakesh Sharma, 10 January 2006.
7. Interview, Umesh Chandra, 13 January 2006
8. See http://www.c31.org.au/program_programs_multicultural.html
9. Interview, Wimal Kannagara, 9 January 2006.
10. Interview, Umesh Chandra, 13 January 2006.
11. Interview, Mrs Jehu, 14 December 2005.

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Chandra, Umesh: Estate Agent and publisher. Editor of the *Brisbane Indian Times*. Originally from Fiji, migrated to Brisbane in mid-1980s. January 10, 2006.

Ishaq, Shamim. Migrated to Brisbane from Pakistan in 1969. Semi-retired, geologist. January 8, 2006.

Jalal, Abdul. President, Islamic Council of Queensland. Fijian businessman who settled in Brisbane in 1988. January 16, 2006.

Mrs M. Jehu. Convener, Radio 4EB Indian program. A Jain who migrated to Brisbane in 1978. December 14, 2005.

Kannagara, Wimal. Sri Lankan professional of Sinhalese background. Settled in Brisbane in the early 1980s. January 9, 2006.

Sharma, Rakesh. President, Hindu Mandir Association. Migrated from Punjab, India, 1985. January 10, 2006.

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KEYWORDS Indians. Diaspora. Australia. Brisbane. Ethnic Minority

ABSTRACT This paper is based on literary and ethnographic research that began in Brisbane in 2003. It is a descriptive account of information that was gathered through interviews, searches in media reports and academic publications that had relevance to the topic. People of Indian origin in Brisbane, as in other parts of Australia, are becoming a more frequent sight as they increasingly descend upon its shores from numerous ex-colonies of the British Empire. It is a country of choice largely because of its political stability, economic success and English as the dominant language. While integration into Australian society fundamentally requires subservience to its constitution and official interpretations of its policies of multi-culturalism, adaptation of Indians still depends upon culturally based institutions such as temples, mosques and regionally based centres for socialization. The information below provides an insight into these issues against the background of how the Australia government is using its policy of multiculturalism to facilitate an easier settlement for people of Indian origin.

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